

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1586

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, April 7, 2015

Title: An act relating to the Royal Slope railroad.

Brief Description: Transferring a railroad right-of-way to the Port of Royal Slope.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Manweller, Dent, Orcutt and Wylie).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/06/15, 97-1.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/23/15, 4/01/15, 4/07/15 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators King, Chair; Fain, Vice Chair; Hobbs, Ranking Minority Member; Liias, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cleveland, Ericksen, Habib, Litzow, Miloscia, Pedersen and Sheldon.

Staff: Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

Background: The Port of Royal Slope (Port) was established in 1958, is governed by three elected commissioners, and includes a 280-acre industrial park. The Port district is approximately 400 square miles and includes the town of Royal City. In 2013 the Port passed a resolution requesting the Legislature transfer the title of the Royal Slope Railroad back to the Port.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) currently owns the Royal Slope Railroad. In 1983 after the Chicago, Milwaukee & St Paul Railroad ceased operating their rail system due to financial difficulties, the Port bought 26 miles of their rail line, which is now known as the Royal Slope Railroad. In 1993 WSDOT purchased the Royal Slope Railroad from the Port, due to financial difficulties at the Port. The Royal Slope Railroad has not been operated since 1998. Recent upgrades on the line would now allow it to be used at slow speeds. A request for an operator for the Royal Slope Railroad was published by WSDOT in 2014 but was unsuccessful.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments): WSDOT must transfer the Royal Slope Railroad right-of-way, and any supplies purchased as part of a recent rehabilitation project, to the Port of Royal Slope. The Port must maintain the right-of-way, and contract with an operator.

The transfer of the Royal Slope Railroad right-of-way is at no cost to the Port of Royal Slope. If there is not an operator on the line for any continuous five-year period, then the right-of-way must revert to WSDOT. If ownership reverts to WSDOT, the rail line must be in substantially the same condition as when it was transferred.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The local Port has an interest in operating this line. It will create jobs and keep trucks off the road. This is needed legislation to get products moving at the Port; please pass this bill so we can get the railroad running.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Manweller, prime sponsor; Jim Potts, Port of Royal Slope.

Persons Signed in to Testify But Not Testifying: No one.